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Almy, Frederic

Ten tales; or,
Salaries vs. relief

[Buffalo]

1916

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TEN TALES

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BY
FREDERIC ALMY

ILLUSTRATED BY
GEORGE J. HARE

THE only way to have a better city is to have better citizens. The only way to have better citizens is to give them better opportunities for morality, education and health.

TEN TALES

OR

SALARIES VS. RELIEF

DOES IT COST
A DOLLAR TO GIVE A
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READ AND DECIDE

SECOND EDITION
REVISED AND ILLUSTRATED
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Photograph by George J. Hare, Buffalo

ONE OF OUR CHILDREN

M B N. Aug. 2. 17

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YOUR MONEY
AND
YOUR LIVES

THAT IS WHAT
MODERN CHARITY
ASKS OF YOU

TO THE READER

These ten short stories tell what actually happened in Buffalo not long ago. If you will read them you will see that the Charity Organization Society often helps what are sometimes called unworthy families; and that it gives generously; but it could not give four or five hundred dollars a year to one family, as it sometimes does, if it shut its eyes and asked no questions.

Even where the money aid is liberal these stories show that the work of the paid visitors helps more than the money given. The ignorant poor clamor for money as the ignorant sick do for medicine; but it would be as absurd to complain of a service which is better than alms as to complain because a doctor's services cost more than his medicine. A doctor without medicine is usually worth more than medicine without a doctor.

This society was not organized to relieve poverty, but to lessen its causes, and it has always received large gifts of money for that work. It is now a relief society also, spending over $30,000.00 a year for relief (last year it was nearer $50,000.00), but its main work is constructive social work and the relief is secondary. The disease of

poverty can be cured as well as relieved, and it is being cured in Buffalo.

In 1876, the year before this society was formed, the city outdoor poor relief was $112,-053.00. Nearly forty years later, in 1914, with a city four times as large and a larger proportion of immigrants, it was $59,549.00. Poverty is growing less in Buffalo, and the existence of this society is one of the many reasons.

Every cent given for relief is so used, but this society spends each year for relief three or four times what it receives for that purpose, and a relief deficit of over $20,000.00 annually is paid from its general fund.

Nearly four hundred volunteer workers give the society as much as one hour of time each week and many of the volunteers give much more. It is one of the tasks of the paid workers to organize *this time, and to make it effective.*

For nearly forty years this society has taken a leading part in organizing *the social work of Buffalo. It was largely responsible for the growth of probation work and juvenile courts; tuberculosis work; wife desertion laws; chattel mortgage laws; tenement crusades; a county lodging house which is a model; public playgrounds and baths; health centers; an inebriety board; and many other things which lessen poverty.*

Community work takes ability and energy,

(Rec. 112) Photograph by George J. Hare, Buffalo

CHILDREN AT A HEALTH CENTER

The city now has four, and intends to have ten Health Centers, identical in boundary with the ten Charity Organization Society districts, and with the Charity Organization Society committees in charge of the social work.

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and costs something, but it is kinder to keep men from falling than merely to help them after they have fallen.

This society cares less for relief than for cure, and less for cure than for prevention.

No competent society will employ incompetent people to help the incompetent poor.

TEN TALES

AN EXPENSIVE FAMILY

A drinking wife, nine children, and a husband dying of consumption, made a hard problem. The eleven slept in two rooms, so that infection was inevitable, and the wife, a handsome young woman, was soon infected. She asked the Charity Organization Society for work because her husband was sick, but the society made her stay at home with her nine children, and to make this possible gave her $400.00 in the first year.

Through a priest the society made the wife take the pledge, and keep it, except for a slight lapse at the wake after her husband died. When she was found to be infected with tuberculosis more aid was refused for a while until she agreed to leave her nine children and go to Raybrook.

After six months there she came back cured, and the priest called by request the day she got home to prevent another spree.

While the mother was away a woman from another aided family was paid to wash and clean in this one, and the oldest girl, Mary, was taken out of a mill to mother the children. When the

mother got home the society found healthier and better paying work for Mary.

Peter, the oldest boy, was wild and would not work. The society had him arrested and sent to Father Baker's, after a term of probation. Peter escaped on the way and used his revolver in a scrimmage with the probation officer who recaptured him.

The society is now paying $300.00 a year, for even a well mother and daughter cannot support ten; but this pension is conditioned absolutely upon steady school attendance by all the children and reasonably good behavior by the mother. (Rec. 1671.)

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and have not charity it profiteth me nothing. —St. Paul, 1 Cor. 13:3.

(Rec. 2201) Photograph by George J. Hare, Buffalo

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WILLOW LEGS

A boy, Henry, only eight years old, lost both legs at the hip while on his way to work contrary to the child labor law. He was afraid of being late, and stole a ride on a train. A brakeman threw a lump of coal at him and he fell under the wheels.

When the Charity Organization Society found Henry he was seventeen years old, a hopeless and helpless burden on his sixty-seven-year-old mother. It seemed necessary to support them both, but the society found a better way. Henry is now supporting his mother, and is as happy as a grig. He was born happy, but he radiates happiness now. At first he earned $1.65 a day ripping bags, but he was soon in charge of the bag department.

The only money aid was a pair of willow legs which cost $125.00. (Rec. 3446.)

Henry will never become one of the peripatetic "sidewalk squatters," many of whom are fakirs who only pretend to be crippled.

Another such boy, William, said he only used his wooden legs for Sundays and baseball games. He could beg better without them. (Rec. 3059.)

It takes as much ability to mend broken lives as to mend broken legs.

HENRY OF THE WILLOW LEGS

Photograph by George J. Hare, Buffalo

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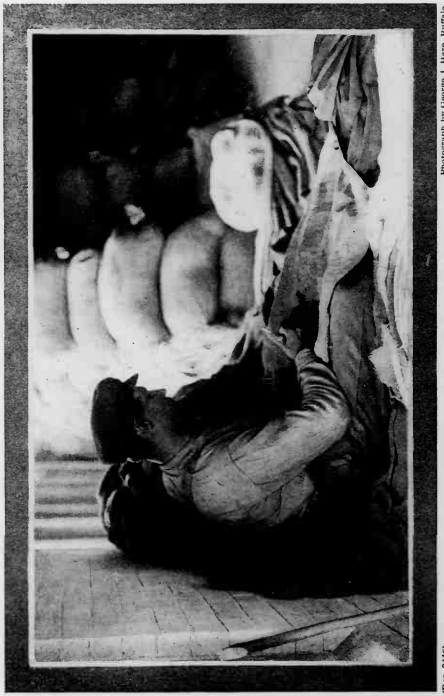

HENRY OF THE WILLOW LEGS

Photograph by George J. Hare, Buffalo

(Rec. 3446)

A SAD STORY

We have here a child who almost suggests the Christ child, and a mother, not now like a Madonna, who has gone through the pit of sorrow from which we are trying to save such children. The little brother looks as if he were already beginning to see the Shadow.

The story is one of the saddest. A few years ago a young Hungarian couple came to Buffalo. Their landlord said they were "the neatest and cleanest tenants he ever had." The man was keen for work for his little family, but he spoke no English, and when the hard times came on he could not find work unaided. The Charity Organization Society did its very best for him, and the man went promptly after every job he was sent to, but he was often idle.

When idle he could not refuse drink, to pass the time, and soon he began to refuse work. The society worked harder, but the man did not work so hard. He tried to work the society, and would look for work which he did not want to find. Then the society tried stopping aid so that he must work. He worked again, but at first refused to go to the Steel Plant because he was afraid. He was hurt there October 20, and died October 26. His third baby was born October 25. His widow will have to be supported. (Rec. 1209.)

(Rec. 1209) Photograph by George J. Hare, Buffalo

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(Rec. 1209) Photograph by George J. Hare, Buffalo

THE MADONNA OF THE SAD STORY

EIGHT DOLLARS

Chapter 1 (January)—A slightly intemperate man out of work; a wife and five small children, all hungry, and a damp, cold house. Henry, an 11-year-old boy, was struck by a live wire last year. He has been dull ever since, and would not go to school, because they laughed at him. Of the six-year-old twins, Ella was bow-legged and lame, and Anna was puny, with weak eyes. When the society found her she was crouching in a dark corner, and would not turn to the light because it hurt her so.

Chapter 2 (February)—The man would not take the jobs which the society found for him, so it had him arrested and put on probation for non-support. He took the next job, and his earnings each week have gone to his wife through the probation officer. Henry was put in a special class for defectives; and after a lot of very patient persuasion by one of the many volunteer visitors of the society both twins were got to the hospital.

Chapter 3 (October)—The man is still working, at $18.00 a week. Ella, the bow-legged twin, is out of the hospital. Her legs had to be broken and set again, but she will grow up normal instead of being crippled by lameness. Anna will soon have the use of her eyes, though not perfectly. The society learned that in another week

Photograph by George J. Hare, Buffalo

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Photograph by George J. Hare, Buffalo

ANNA

after it found her she would have been entirely blind. Henry is improving.

The total money relief in this family was $8.82, until the man got his first pay. It may have cost eight dollars to give eight dollars, but, *dollar for dollar, the salaries helped more.*

Suppose the society had merely given the eight dollars. (Rec. 1310.)

I was a father to the poor; and the cause which I knew not I searched out.—Job 29:16.

THE WIDOW'S STORE

Five years ago a laborer was killed in an industrial accident. His widow had five little children, and to support the family she tried to keep a candy store, but it did not go. Then her plan was to send the three youngest children to an orphan asylum and let the two little boys sell newspapers, and to keep a store herself.

She went with her plan to the county superintendent of the poor who referred her to the Charity Organization Society. Their plan was different. She was a splendid woman, and the society decided that she ought to mother her own children instead of breaking up the family. The society gave a pension of $250.00 a year and let the mother work only a little. The oldest boy, John, is now earning four dollars a week, all of which he gives to his mother, and as soon as the next boy, Ben, is able to take a position they will need no more charity.

The society prefers homegrown children to institution children, and if this fine mother had worked out daily John and Ben would have been apt to grow up wild and ignorant. This happens continually, and it is expensive.

The society worked hard for the accident compensation law and to some extent for the

widows' pension law, either one of which will for the future make charity unnecessary in a family like this. (Rec. 1212.)

"It is better to put one family permanently beyond the need of charity than to tide twenty over into next week's misery."

(Rec. 1013) Photograph by George J. Hare, Buffalo

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WIDOWHOOD

QUICK WORK

An elderly colored woman in Buffalo was on the point of being put out on the street because her rent was unpaid. She declared that she had no kith or kin except her daughter, Nellie, in Columbus. The Charity Organization Society telegraphed at once to Columbus, but could find no trace of Nellie.

A neighbor said that a colored barber in a village fifty miles away had sometimes helped her.

The telephone book showed just one minister in this village who had a telephone.

He was called up at once by long distance, and knew of a colored barber, who proved to be the woman's husband with whom she had quarreled and of whom she did not want to ask aid.

He arrived the next morning, and has taken care of the woman ever since, though the society has helped a little with employment. (Rec. 1173.)

Did the salary of this visitor divert money from the poor, or did it help the poor?

"He gives not best who gives most, but he gives most who gives best."

COLOR RELIEF

Photograph by George J. Hare, Buffalo

(Rec. 2611)

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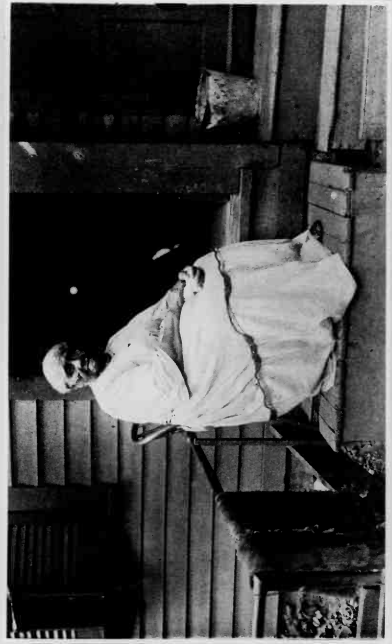

COLOR RELIEF

Photograph by George J. Hare, Buffalo

(Rec. 2511)

FOSTER OR STEP MOTHER

A Buffalo mother asked the county to commit a little girl of eleven to an institution, for stealing and frequenting disorderly Chinese houses. The request was referred to the Charity Organization Society which began investigating.

Investigation is often kind. As has been well said, we do not investigate to find people out but to find out how to help them.

The mother was found to be a step-mother whose habits were little better than those of her husband, an intemperate, profane teamster, excommunicated by the church. The school teacher said that the girl, Jennie, was one of her best pupils and had no bad habits.

The parents wilted when the society visitor and the priest called at the house with threats of punishment. They were made to sign papers giving up Jennie, who is now in an excellent country family under good supervision.

Her little body was covered with vermin and with black and blue sores, and for two years she had slept on the floor. Jennie has proved to be very sweet and willing.

No money at all was given. (Rec. 329.)

"Not Alms But a Friend"

(Rec. 329) Photograph by George J. Hare, Buffalo

FROM STEP-MOTHER TO FOSTER-MOTHER

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SAVING YOUR SOUL

An intemperate father was squandering his money so that his wife was discouraged, and the children were suffering. The family had been comfortable but before long his little girl, Susie, was foraging on the street.

Money aid seemed necessary, but by long, hard, patient work one of the visitors of the Charity Organization Society won his esteem and persuaded him to pay her seven dollars of his wages every week for the support of his family. It was done without even the stigma of appearance in court and probation.

Once when he showed a tendency to backslide this visitor asked his wife if the man would come to see her. She answered: "Sure, Miss, he would go through fire and water for you." (Rec. 1257.)

Another of her clients was less grateful, and said to her, when money aid was refused: "You'd better just remember that if it wasn't for the likes of us the likes of you would be out of a job."

She got off more easily than a church visitor in England who received this greeting: "You clear out! You can't save your soul off of me."

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SUSIE FORAGING FOR FUEL

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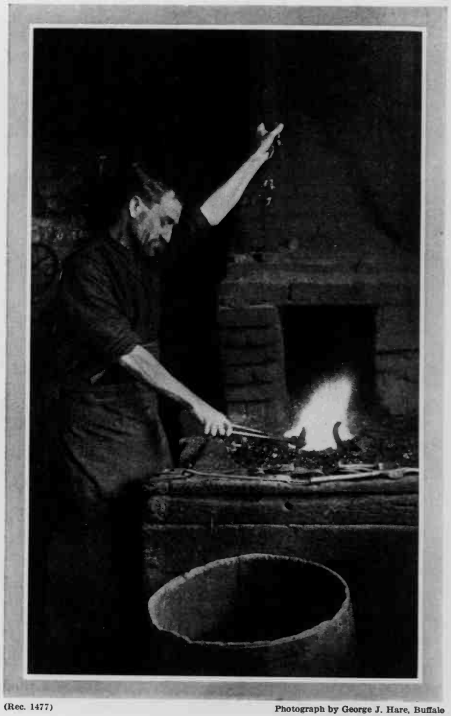
THE CONSUMPTIVE BLACKSMITH

There was once a time when the Charity Organization Society of Buffalo put $110.00 into one family in a single month. It was a rather difficult family. All that was needed for its wise care was a combination of Solomon, Job and Croesus.

A blacksmith of a fine sort had a bad cough, and the society found that he had advanced tuberculosis. He was too far advanced for Raybrook, and he refused to go to a hospital, although he was infecting his family with the disease.

His wife and his son, Charlie, were already infected, but were still curable if taken away from the contagion. Raybrook was full, so they were sent at once to a private sanitarium at $70.00 a month, and a pension of $40.00 a month was given to the man and his daughters at home. Then the wife got homesick and came back with Charlie. Her place was with her dying husband, she said, and it was hard to gainsay it.

The money which is so hard to get was now breeding tuberculosis instead of checking it. The society coaxed and threatened and persuaded in vain. Then it stopped all aid flat, and the blacksmith began to work himself to death, while the sick wife worked too. After a month of this the wife saw her mistake and she and Charlie went to Raybrook, where they were cured.



(Rec. 1477) Photograph by George J. Hare, Buffalo

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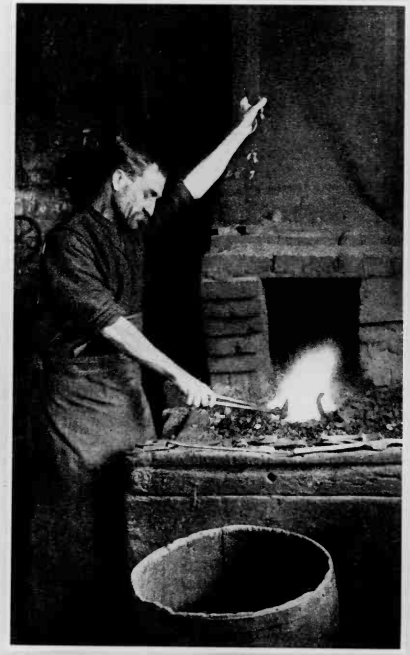

(Rec. 1477) Photograph by George J. Hare, Buffalo

THE CONSUMPTIVE BLACKSMITH

In the meantime the sick father and the two daughters were again supported. The man cannot live, but the rest of the family is saved from disease and is independent. (Rec. 1477.)

"He who gives doles to many has never enough for any."

A FAILURE.

We hope virtue is its own reward, for some big-hearted people in this tale get no other. A fine old couple, a devoted runaway daughter and her good husband, a wonderful nephew, a generous young benefactor who gave up to thirty dollars a month for eleven years (besides giving time and thought) and a volunteer visitor named Jolly, who was faithful to the end, all together brought misery to a whole family. It would take a great novelist to tell it fitly.

When the photograph, Old Age, was taken seven years ago, for our thirty-second annual report, the man was eighty, and was pleased that his picture was chosen. "I have never had anything to do with a more delightful old couple," wrote our visitor. "One cannot enter their home without a feeling of deep reverence for old age." The next years were poignant for this old couple and their kin.

At this time the man was almost helpless, and blind in one eye. His wife of seventy-four cared for him, though she was ruptured and given to fits. The third in this home was Lucy, a crippled daughter of thirty-six, who had never walked.

A married daughter paid the rent until she died, but their main support was the generous young fellow who has been mentioned.

As the old man got older he also got set and unreasonable. They had lived in the same house in Buffalo thirty years, and would not leave it for a Home or a hospital, though the doctors all said it was cruel, unsafe and "no charity" to leave them at home in their helplessness. Attempts to pay a woman to care for them in the house were costly and succeeded poorly.

A daughter, Barbara, had run away from this home without a word of explanation. Two years later she was heard of in Rochester, but letters about her parents remained unanswered until she found that her mother was going to a hospital, when she came to see her, and came often afterwards. Soon after, the old man had a letter from his brother James, whom he had not heard from for thirty-four years, and a newly discovered nephew proved later a friend in need and deed.

Everybody agreed that the three helpless people could not stay as they were, and at last with reluctance the society told them they must go to the county hospital. The old man then wrote the nephew, in New Jersey, who offered to take all three into his own home "as long as they live," though he had never seen any of them. Barbara joined the society in writing him that this would not do, and that they could not get the care they needed in a country village or outside a hos-

OLD AGE

Photograph by George J. Hare, Buffalo

(Rec. 1401)

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OLD AGE

(Rec. 1401)

pital. He answered: "I relise all you tell me, but if they want to come I will not say know." The old lady was coaxed out to the county hospital in an automobile, to look it over, but the old man would not consider it. Barbara found her sister Lucy crying with fright at the thought of going to the strange land of New Jersey, and her father was so difficult that he would hardly have her in the house. "My father wouldn't let me do anything; he wanted to be boss." At last, however, on September 12, they all went to the county hospital, and the society breathed a sigh of relief; but on September 30, the nephew arrived, and somehow or other convoyed them to New Jersey.

It is hard to transplant old trees, and no one was happy. Villages do not always suit those who know cities, and doctors are scarce in the country. In a few months everybody wrote Barbara in Rochester that unless she came on and got them they would somehow get to her. Barbara's husband was good, and consented to take his wife's sick relatives in their flat. After they came she had to leave her own work at ten dollars a week, to tend her home hospital. Later she writes us:

"I don't think a day passed but I received a letter from first one and then the other until they nearly drove me insane. . . I had to go to New Jersey all alone and bring all three of them here.

There is no end to the money I have to spend

for medicine. I am so deep in debt that I don't know which way to turn. I owe twenty-nine dollars on a grocery bill that my husband does not know of, and my mother and Lucy both need clothes. . . I am almost naked myself, but about that I don't care. . . It is of the others I think."

The Rochester United Charities has now taken hold, and writes: "Her husband is earning seventy-five dollars a month, and is an unusually unselfish man, as he has shouldered all the expense of his wife's family." So it stands to-day. The man is eighty-seven. No one is happy. As the society wrote Barbara, "It is certainly a great pity that your cousin did not allow the hospital plan for the treatment of your three helpless ones to be carried out as was planned here." (Rec. 1401.)

"Love with Judgment" is a good definition of organized charity.

POSTSCRIPT

The following letter shows the methods of the Charity Organization Society in a family of the sort which is sometimes called unworthy.

Buffalo, June 11, 1914.

Mr._____

Erie County Bank Building.

Dear Sir:

Your facts in regard to the P——— family were familiar to us. We have known this family for seven years. Then there were only five children instead of nine, so you see that much of Mr. P———'s poverty is voluntary. We have spent much money on this difficult family.

For two years our aid averaged three dollars a week, and we would have been willing to spend much more than this on a high-grade family which would work well with us; but I remember one conference where it was decided to stop aid because the money went for drink and we could not seem to accomplish anything useful. The money did not feed the family, but fed the drunkenness.

Perhaps, however, our touch with the family for so many years may have something to do with the amazing fact that the oldest girl, now fourteen years old, is a very nice sort of child.

It is the nine children of whom we want to make decent citizens, if it is possible. This morn-

A VERY NICE SORT OF CHILD

Photograph by George J. Hare, Buffalo

(Rec. 7030)

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ing we had a conference with Mr. Frank E. Wade, who is chairman of the one of our ten district committees in which the P——— family lives. There were others present also and the family was thoroughly discussed.

Mr. Wade is in favor of trying the experiment of paying their rent for a time, and we are to make every effort to find a thoroughly competent volunteer visitor, in addition to our paid visitor, who will endeavor to make our money help in influence for good. We expect the children to go regularly to school and we will get a weekly report of their attendance from their principal. We can sometimes make our money aid effective for better habits in the families.

We have learned not to ask or expect too much. *The purpose of this society is not so much to put an end to suffering as to put an end to poverty and to make better citizens.* In spite of all we could do, when we stopped giving last, the larger income of the family seemed only to cause more drinking. Sometimes suffering and hunger in families work for redemption.

I hope we can have your aid in this new experiment. When we find a good volunteer visitor, for instance—and it will not be easy—perhaps a line from you may help us, and in any case your standing with the P———s may serve us when we try to help them.

In your letter you speak of the cost of caring for this family if they are broken up in institutions. I am never so much interested in saving financially either the county money or our own money as I am in the chance to help a family to better living, whatever it costs, and it may be that by beginning again with this family we can help these children. (Rec. 1247.)

Yours very truly,

FREDERIC ALMY,

Secretary.

Organized Charity is Organized Love.

Dictionary of National Biography, John Bradford, 1510-1565. "There is a tradition that on seeing some criminals going to execution he exclaimed: *There, but for the grace of God, goes John Bradford.*"

Who gives well builds character and the State: who gives himself gives best. (Richard Watson Gilder on a pylon of the Triumphal Bridge, Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, 1901.)

THE daily work in a charity organization office, to be well done, demands:

An intelligence that shall not slumber

An earnestness that shall not tire

A patience not to be overcome

A sympathy that will not suffer itself to be chilled

And none know better than those of us who have attempted the work how miserably easy it is in these respects to fail, and how miserably certain we are, when we fail, to err.

EDWARD T. DEVINE

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